

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD**

Red Rock Hounds, Inc. SRP# NV-030-01518
EA# NV-030-01016

Finding of No Significant Impact

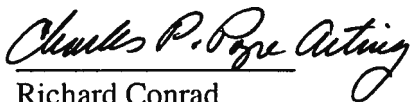
Based on the analysis of Environmental Assessment (EA) #NV-030-01016, I have determined that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Decision

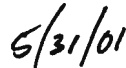
It is my decision to issue a Special Recreation Permit (#NV-030-01518) to the Red Rock Hounds, Inc., as described in the proposed action of EA# NV-030-01016 (and previous environmental documents referenced in this EA), and subject to the mitigating measures in the EA and the Special Stipulations attached to the SRP. This permit will be valid for a period of five years,

Rationale

The proposed action will not result in unnecessary or undue degradation of public lands. The proposal is in compliance with the Lahontan Resource Management Plan.



Richard Conrad
Assistant Manager, Nonrenewable Resources
Carson City Field Office



Date

Red Rock Hounds, Inc.
Special Recreation Permit (SRP)# NV-030-01518

EA-NV-030-01016
8372

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE AND NEED

a. Introduction

The Carson City Field Office receives approximately 50 applications for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) each year. This is a renewal of an existing five-year permit, however, an EA is being done to address the applicant's desire to expand her operations into two additional areas. The proponent has submitted this renewal application since she wishes to continue to conduct English-style "fox hunts" on public lands, during which club members on horseback chase coyotes along with a pack of hounds. Vehicles and trailers are occasionally parked on public lands, however the actual hunt itself is the primary use of BLM administered lands.

b. Purpose and Need

Under 43 CFR 8372.1-1, SRPs are required for commercial recreational use of public lands. Under Subpart 8372.3 issuance of a permit is discretionary with the authorized officer. It was determined that a new Environmental Assessment (EA), tiered off of previous environmental documents, was necessary since the applicant has requested the use of two additional areas for which a permit had not been previously issued. Action is needed on this proposal since the Bureau is required to analyze SRP applications under 43 CFR 8372.2.

c. Land Use Plan Conformance Statement

The proposed action and alternatives described below are in conformance with the Lahontan Resource Management Plan. The Plan does not speak directly to the issue of Recreation, however, the Lahontan Management Decisions Summary (1987 Update) states on page #22 that the Recreation objective is to "Provide a wide range of quality recreation opportunities on public lands in the RMP area". In addition, the Update: Standard Operating Procedures (April 1994), page# 10, states that "All BLM lands that are not limited in the RMP are open to all individual, commercial and competitive outdoor recreation uses."

There is one activity plan which applies to the geographic area of the proposed action and alternatives. This is the Lassen-Washoe Wildlife Habitat Area Habitat Management Plan (HMP), most recently revised in June, 1988. In addition, three previous environmental documents have been prepared which address this activity. The first was EA# NV-030-87-54, dated September 18, 1987. A second EA, dated August 27, 1990, was given the number EA# NV-030-90-065. In 1996 when the first five-year permit was issued, an Administrative Determination (#NV-030-96014) tiered off the previous EAs, was approved on April 8, 1996.

CHAPTER II - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

a. Proposed Action

Lynn Lloyd, d.b.a. Red Rock Hounds, Inc., has submitted an application to renew for a period of five years her Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to chase coyotes from horseback in English-style "fox hunts" across public lands managed by the Carson City Field Office. Previous EAs (see I.c. above) have analyzed the impacts of this activity in the Hungry Valley (A) and Bedell Flat (B) areas, and are incorporated here by reference. (See Maps 1 & 2). The impacts to these areas remain the same as discussed in these earlier documents and will not be discussed further in this EA. This EA will consider the impact of adding two new areas, East Petersen (C) and Sand Hills (D), to the permit renewal. (See Maps 1 & 2). In both instances, staging and parking of vehicles and horse trailers associated with the Proposed Action would be located on private lands in the vicinity of these areas.

During a typical hunt, as few as 5-10, but often as many as 15-20 riders on horseback pursue a coyote, which a pack of 20-30 hounds has flushed, on a cross-country chase. Each pursuit lasts until the coyote either eludes the hounds, enters terrain where the horses cannot follow, or becomes tired, at which time the hounds are recalled. Although there have been instances of the coyote (which is considered a varmint in Nevada) being caught, this is rare. No firearms are used during the course of the hunt. Historically, several hunts are held completely on private lands, however roughly 4-6 hunts take place on public lands monthly during hunt season which is usually October- March. Stipulations regarding the dates during which areas previously authorized for this activity may be used are shown on Attachment 1. Attachment 2 incorporates these stipulations, and the mitigation measures outlined below, into a set of Special Stipulations which would be attached to, and become an integral part of, the SRP for this activity should it be authorized.

b. Alternatives

No Action. The Proposed Action would not be approved, however the existing permit allowing the use of the Bedell Flat and Hungry Valley areas would be renewed for a period of five years. The applicant would be restricted to conducting hunts on private lands and on public lands in these two areas.

CHAPTER III - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

a. Scoping and Issue Identification

An SRP application to conduct the Proposed Action was received in the Field Office on December 16, 2000, although informal discussions regarding the applicants request had been held several times prior to that date. A NEPA Consultation & Cultural Resources Needs Form describing the Proposed Action was submitted to the Assistant Manager, Nonrenewable Resources, on February 13, 2001. On March 5, 2001, the proposal was discussed by the NEPA Committee for the Field Office which determined that the preparation of an Environmental Assessment for the new areas under consideration for approval was required. On the same day, the EA Team identified by the NEPA Committee was notified that they had been selected to assist in preparation of the EA.

Public scoping letters were sent to the individuals and organizations listed below in Chapter V.b., and a thirty day comment period ended on May 21, 2001. No comments on the Proposed Action were received.

Scoping was done within the office between April 2 and May 1, 2001. All team members were contacted personally and each one also submitted written comments. At the time of the NEPA Committee meeting the following issues were identified for scoping:

Wildlife	Wild Horses
Livestock	Recreation
Lands & Realty	Cultural Resources
Native American Religious Consultation	

The issue of Lands & Realty will not be carried forward since it was determined by Chuck Pope, Realty Specialist, that there are no Lands or Realty issues in the areas covered by the Proposed Action.

b. Proposed Action

Critical Elements of the Human Environment:

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternatives in this EA:

	<u>Determined By</u>
Air Quality.....	Internal Scoping
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.....	Internal Scoping
Environmental Justice.....	Internal Scoping

Farm Lands (prime or unique).....	Internal Scoping
Floodplains.....	Internal Scoping
Noxious Weeds.....	Internal Scoping
Paleontology.....	Internal Scoping
Threatened or Endangered Animals.....	Internal Scoping
Threatened or Endangered Plants.....	Internal Scoping
Wastes (hazardous or solid).....	Internal Scoping
Water Quality.....	Internal Scoping
Wetlands/Riparian.....	Internal Scoping
Wild and Scenic Rivers.....	Internal Scoping
Wilderness.....	Internal Scoping

Resources Present but not Affected: (other than critical elements)

Bureau specialists have further determined that the following resources, although present in the project area, are not affected by the proposed action:

Minerals	Visual Resources
Forestry	Water Rights
Vegetation	Soils
Socioeconomic	

Resources Present and Brought Forward for Analysis:

III.b.1. Wildlife

The species which inhabit the proposed use areas are largely common to it. Mammals include pronghorn antelope, black-tailed jackrabbits, cottontail rabbits, coyotes, badger and several species of mice. In addition to a small resident herd of mule deer (~ 20), mule deer from the Lassen-Washoe Interstate Deer Herd migrate in the Fall to both areas from the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Both areas are considered critical deer winter range. Birds include Ravens, Piñon jays, raptors such as prairie falcons, golden eagles and red-tailed hawks, and upland game species such as California quail and mourning dove. Other species such as mountain and western bluebird, black-throated gray warbler, and Vesper and sage sparrows` probably use the area, as well. Common reptiles include northern sagebrush lizard and Great Basin rattlesnakes.

III.b.2. Wild Horses

The Granite Peak Herd Area is located within the Sand Hills (D) proposed use area. It is estimated that there are 30-40 head of wild horses in the Herd Area.

III.b.3. Livestock

Both proposed use areas are within the Antelope Mountain Allotment. The grazing permittee is DS Ranches and the season of use is April 15 - October 31.

III.b.4. Recreation

Recreational activities which take place in the proposed use areas are casual use and dispersed in nature. They include hiking, horseback riding, upland game hunting and hunting for mule deer. An illegal motocross track was constructed in the East Petersen (C) area a few years ago. Although it was closed and rehabilitated, some local residents persist in using it. Roads in both areas are used for mountain biking, motorcycling, four-wheel driving and driving for pleasure. Recreational events in the vicinity of the proposed use areas which are authorized under Special Recreation Permits include field dog trials, horse endurance rides and hunts conducted by the Red Rock Hounds, Inc. Horse endurance rides are the only events actually taking place in the proposed use areas at the present time.

III.b.5. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are present and scattered throughout both areas. However, there are no sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places and there are none eligible for listing. A Cultural Resources Needs Assessment was completed and its findings are summarized in the Environmental Consequences section.

III.b.7. Native American Religious Consultation

Scoping letters were sent to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony.

c. Alternatives

The description of the affected environment for the No Action alternative would be the same as that for the proposed action.

Chapter IV - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Proposed Action

IV.a.1. Wildlife

The species listed in Chapter III may be slightly displaced during the time the hunts are taking place, however no threats to populations or permanent displacement is anticipated. By limiting the season of use for these two areas to September 15 - November 15, the possibility of placing undue stress on the Lassen-Washoe Interstate Deer Herd during the time they are on their critical winter range should be minimized. Under Special Stipulation No. 13 attached to the SRP which would authorize use of these areas, any incident of harassment of wildlife, wild horses or domestic livestock may result in revocation of the permit by the Authorized Officer.

IV.a.2. Wild Horses

As with wildlife, wild horses may temporarily move from the areas when hunts are taking place. It is not anticipated however that there would be any permanent displacement of individual horses or the herd, or any threat to their population.

IV.a.3. Livestock

If approved, hunts could take place during the last month of the authorized grazing season of use. Past experience in other areas where hunts have taken place when cattle are on the allotment has been that cattle may move if the hunt comes too close, but that this is brief and temporary. Special Stipulations Nos. 6, 10 and 13 attached to the SRP which would authorize use of these areas, provisions are included which address installation of ramps or jumps over fences, any damage which may be caused to range improvements as a result of the permitted activity, and harassment of domestic livestock.

IV.a.4. Recreation

The Proposed Action would result in the provision of two additional areas in which hunts by the Red Rock Hounds could take place during a portion of the year. Impacts on dispersed recreational activities taking place in these areas and on horse endurance rides authorized under an SRP should be minimal. Some recreationists may choose to avoid these areas during the time hunts are taking place, however hunts seldom last more than 3-4 hours and only use public lands on an average once a week.

Hunts also have the potential to inadvertently cross onto private lands, and the baying of the hounds may disturb residents in nearby populated areas. Under provisions of the newly completed (January 2001) *Final Southern Washoe County Urban Interface Plan Amendment*, a buffer of one-quarter mile should be maintained between populated areas and BLM permitted recreation events if it is determined through the environmental review process that the proposed event(s) may have negative impacts to nearby residents. This appears to be a real possibility in this instance and this one-quarter mile buffer should be included as a mitigating measure.

IV.a.5. Cultural Resources

A Cultural Resources Needs Assessment was completed for this project and it was determined that the proposed action is an Exempt Undertaking under Categorical Exclusion No. C-10. It is not anticipated that cultural resources in these areas would be impacted as a result of the Proposed Action.

IV.a.7. Native American Religious Consultation

Scoping letters were sent to the tribes listed in Chapter III above and they were asked to respond within thirty days if they had any concerns about the Proposed Action. No responses were received.

b. No Action Alternative

IV.b.1. Wildlife

There would be no impact to wildlife.

IV.b.2. Wild Horses

There would be no impact to wild horse populations or use areas.

IV.b.3. Livestock

There would be no impact to livestock grazing.

IV.b.4. Recreation

There would be no impact to recreational activities or opportunities in the area.

IV.b.5. Cultural Resources

There would be no impact to cultural resources.

IV.b.6. Native American Religious Consultation

There would be no impact on Native American Religious activities.

c. Mitigating Measures

See Attachment 2, Revised Special Stipulations. These would be attached to any SRP authorizing use of the two proposed use areas, as well as use of the two areas which have previously been used for this activity. This includes maintaining a buffer of one-quarter mile between populated areas and hunts conducted under the SRP.

Both the Sand Hills (D) and East Petersen (C) areas could not be used to conduct hunts by the Red Rock Hounds, Inc., between **November 16** and **April 30** in order to protect critical deer winter range.

Lands south of Summit Spring in the East Petersen (C) area were largely burned during the summer of 2000 and reseeded that Fall. In order to allow revegetation to take place only lands north of Summit Spring could be used for the proposed activity for at least the next two hunt seasons..

d. Residual Impacts

It is not anticipated that there will be any residual impacts if the Proposed Action is approved.

e. Cumulative Impacts

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of the proposed action or alternatives.

f. Monitoring

The Special Recreation Permit which would authorize use of the proposed use areas would be monitored on a periodic basis to assure compliance with the Special Stipulations for the permit.

Chapter V - CONSULTATION & COORDINATION

a. List of Preparers:

Terry Knight, Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
John Axtell, Wild Horse & Burro Specialist	Wild Horses
William R. Brigham, Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife
Jennifer Derley, Range Conservationist	Livestock/Range
Terri Knutson, Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Environmental Coordination
Charles Pope, Realty Specialist	Lands & Realty
Peggy Waski, Archaeologist	Cultural Resources

b. Persons, Groups or Agencies Consulted:

Nevada Division of Wildlife
Washoe County Department of Comprehensive Planning
D.S. Ranches
Intermountain Land & Cattle Company
Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
Reno-Sparks Indian Colony

APPENDICES OR ATTACHMENTS

- a. Map 1
- b. Map 2
- c. Attachment 1, Current Special Stipulations
- d. Attachment 2, Revised Special Stipulations

PREPARED BY:



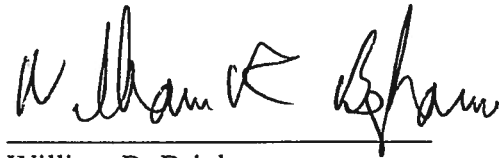
Terry F. Knight
Outdoor Recreation Planner

05/29/01
Date

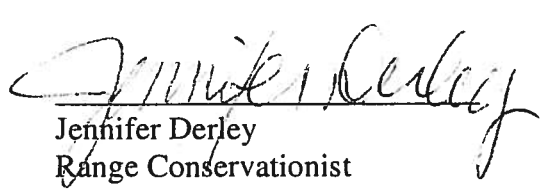
REVIEWED BY:


John Axtell
Wild Horse & Burro Specialist


29 May 01
Date


William R. Brigham
Wildlife Biologist

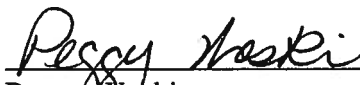
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Date


Jennifer Derley
Range Conservationist

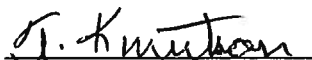
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Charles P. Pope
Realty Specialist

5/29/01
Date


Peggy Waski
Archaeologist

5/30/01
Date


Terri Knutson
Environmental Coordinator

5/31/01
Date



Red Rock Hounds Hunt Areas



T22N

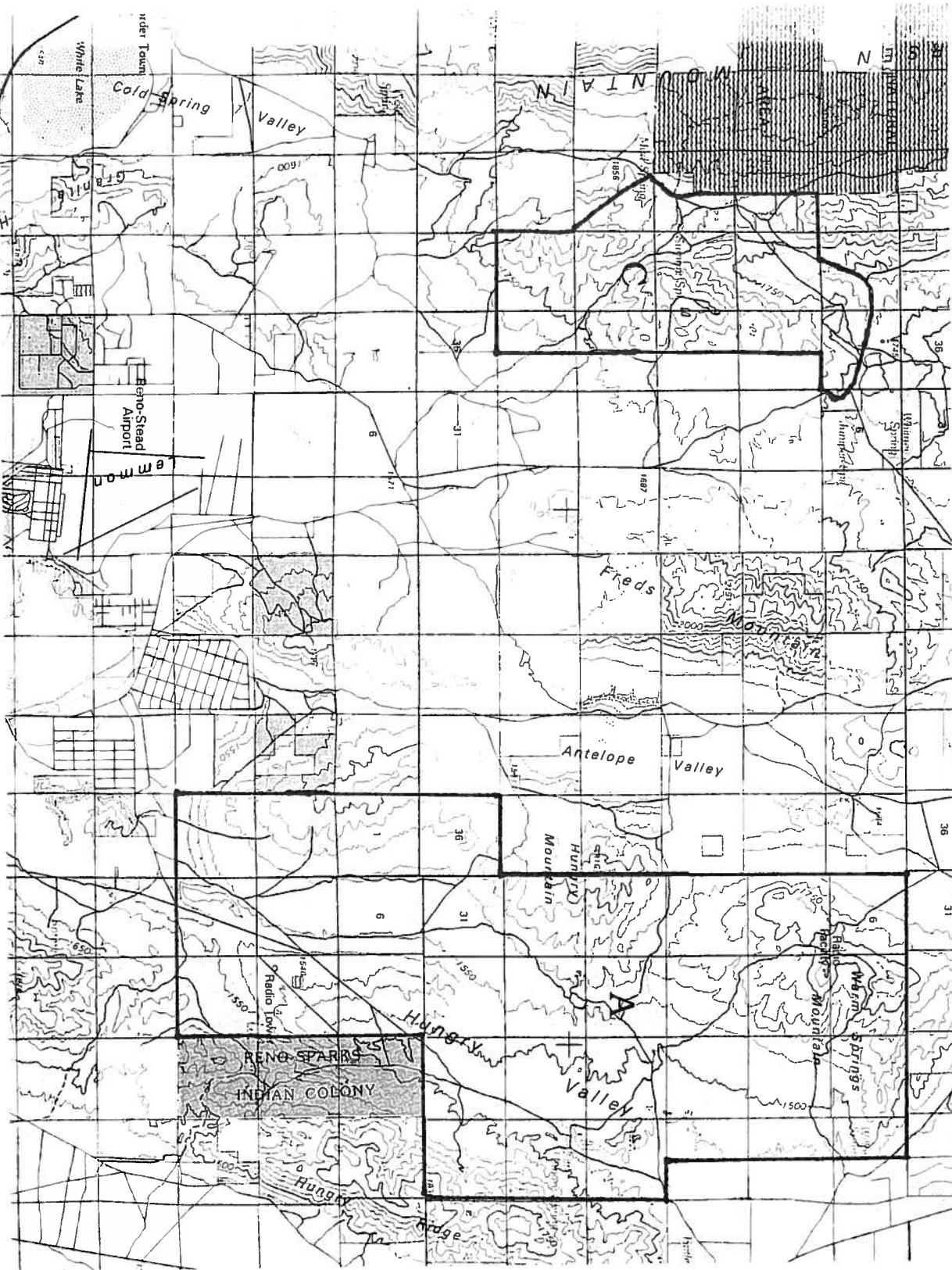
T21N

R18E

R19E

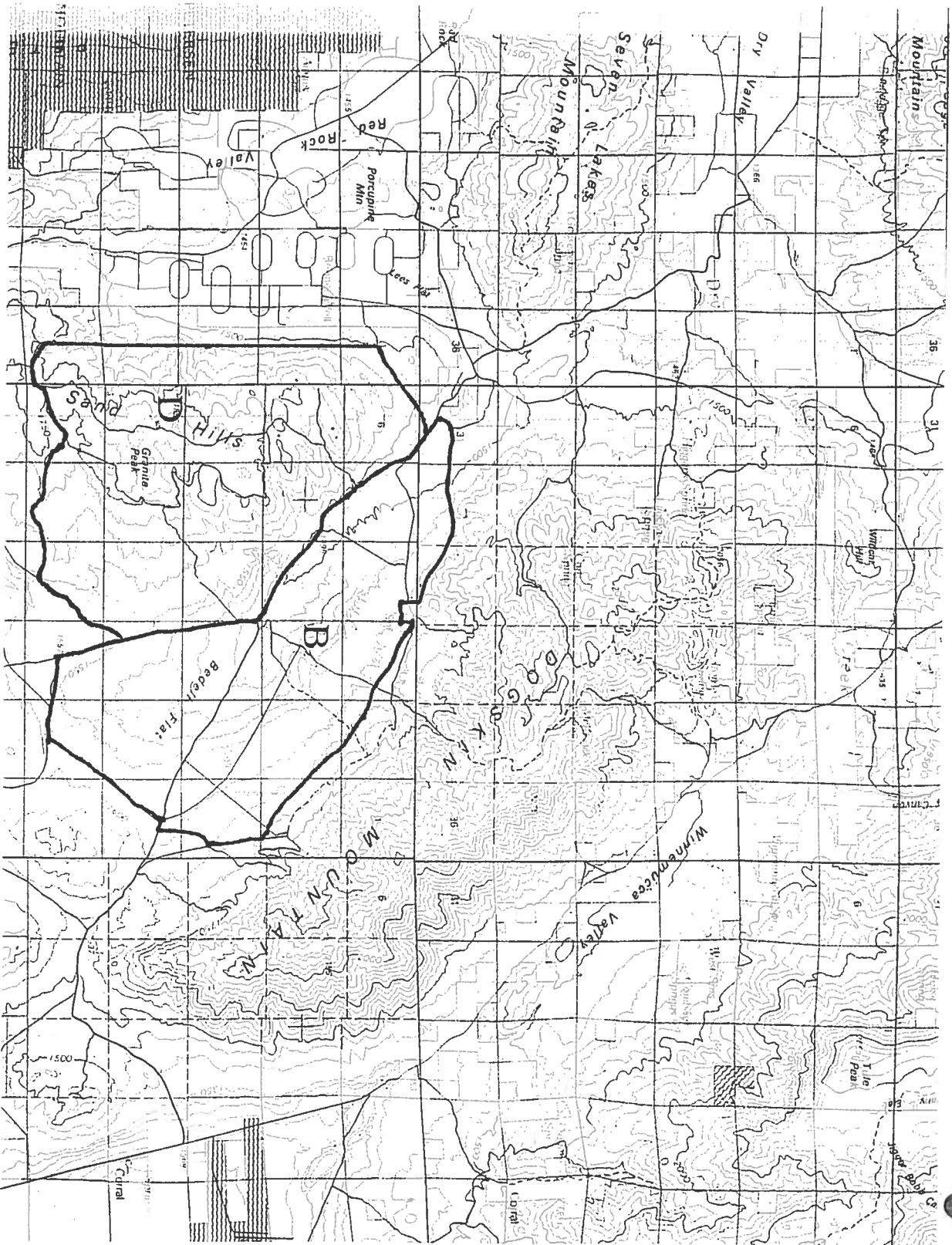
R20E

Scale $\frac{1}{2}$ " = 1 mile





Red Rock Hounds Hunt Areas



R18E

R19E

R20E

Scale $\frac{1}{2}$ " = 1 mile



SPECIAL STIPULATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Red Rock Hounds Coyote "Hunts" (October 1, 1996 - April 15, 2001)

1. The two authorized use areas, Bedell Flat and Hungry Valley, are depicted on the attached map. The authorized periods of use for these areas are as follows:

Bedell Flat November 1 - February 28,

Hungry Valley October 1 - April 15,

2. The permittee shall notify the BLM of event dates thirty (30) days prior to any event, either in writing or by telephone.
3. The permittee shall keep his/her liability insurance policy current and in effect for the life of the permit. The policy shall list the U.S. Government, Bureau of Land Management, as a "co-insured" or "additional insured" and the permittee shall provide evidence of policy renewal to the BLM **at least 10 days prior** to the policy's expiration date. Failure to do so will result in cancellation of the permit.
4. The permittee is responsible for keeping accurate financial records for each event held on public lands as well as an accurate count of the number of riders participating in each event. The **final use fee** will be either \$2.00 per rider per event or 3% of the **gross** receipts for those events held on public lands, whichever is greater. The permittee will keep his/her "Post-Use Report for Multi-Year Special Recreation Permits" up to date and submit it, along with appropriate use fees for the year, no later than **September 15th** each year the permit is in effect. .
5. The permittee shall submit a \$200.00 performance bond prior to issuance of the permit. This bond shall be retained for the life of the permit in order to assure compliance with the terms of the permit.
6. Establishment of permanent markers or construction of any physical improvements on public lands, such as ramps or fence jumps, is prohibited. Maintenance of existing improvements authorized under previous permits shall not be conducted without first contacting the authorized officer and obtaining written permission to do so.
7. Overnight camping and open fires are prohibited. All litter must be removed immediately following each event.
8. The BLM reserves the right to close the area to recreational use at any time, particularly during periods of extreme fire danger.
9. Permittee will be aware of, and abide by, any pertinent state and local laws and regulations.

10. The permittee will be responsible for repair and/or restoration of any improvements placed on public lands by BLM or its authorized users that may be damaged as a result of his/her activities.
11. This permit does not authorize crossing or use of private lands or lands under the control of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony.
12. Vehicle parking will be confined to identified parking areas.
13. Particular care will be taken to avoid any harassment of wild horses, domestic livestock or wildlife, especially mule deer and antelope, during the permittee's use of the area. Any incident of harassment may result in revocation of the permit by the Authorized Officer.

SPECIAL STIPULATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Red Rock Hounds Coyote "Hunts" (April 1, 2001 - March 31, 2006)

1. The four authorized use areas, Bedell Flat, Hungry Valley, East Petersen and Sand Hills are depicted on the attached maps. The authorized periods of use for these areas are as follows:

<u>Hungry Valley</u> (A)	October 1 - April 15
<u>Bedell Flat</u> (B)	November 1 - February 28
<u>East Petersen</u> (C)	September 15 - November 15
<u>Sand Hills</u> (D)	September 15 - November 15

Except in those instances where permission has been granted by the landowner, the permittee must keep hunt activities at least one-quarter mile away from populated areas and private residences.

2. The permittee shall notify the BLM of event dates thirty (30) days prior to any event, either in writing or by telephone.
3. The permittee shall keep his/her liability insurance policy current and in effect for the life of the permit. The policy shall list the U.S. Government, Bureau of Land Management, as a "co-insured" or "additional insured" and the permittee shall provide evidence of policy renewal to the BLM **at least 10 days prior** to the policy's expiration date. Failure to do so will result in cancellation of the permit.
4. The permittee is responsible for keeping accurate financial records for each event held on public lands as well as an accurate count of the number of riders participating in each event. The **final use fee** will be either \$4.00 **per rider per** event or 3% of the **gross** receipts for those events held on public lands, whichever is greater. The permittee will keep his/her "Post-Use Report for Multi-Year Special Recreation Permits" up to date and submit it, along with appropriate use fees for the year, no later than **September 1st** each year the permit is in effect.
5. The permittee shall submit a \$200.00 performance bond prior to issuance of the permit. This bond shall be retained for the life of the permit in order to assure compliance with the terms of the permit.
6. Establishment of permanent markers or construction of any physical improvements on public lands, such as ramps or fence jumps, is allowed only with the written permission of the affected grazing allotment permittee and the BLM. All ramps or jumps, whether existing or new, must be maintained on a regular basis and to the satisfaction of both the affected grazing allotment permittee and the BLM.
7. Overnight camping and open fires are prohibited. All litter must be removed immediately following each event. In order to lessen the chances for the spread of noxious weeds, the permittee may not transport hay onto public lands.

8. The BLM reserves the right to close any area to recreational use at any time, particularly during periods of extreme fire danger. In addition, areas or portions of areas which have experienced a fire may be closed for a more extended period in order to allow for revegetation
9. Permittee will be aware of, and abide by, any pertinent state and local laws and regulations.
10. The permittee will be responsible for repair and/or restoration of any improvements placed on public lands by BLM or its authorized users that may be damaged as a result of his/her activities.
11. This permit does not authorize crossing or use of private lands or lands under the control of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony.
12. Vehicle parking will be confined to identified parking areas.
13. Particular care will be taken to avoid any harassment of wild horses, domestic livestock or wildlife, especially mule deer and antelope, during the permittee's use of the areas. Any incident of harassment may result in revocation of the permit by the Authorized Officer.